

Handicapped

Agenda

Issues for discussion with the DCI in the
order in which they are to be discussed:

I. Attitudes

1. Management

2. Employee

II. Sign Language Interpreters

III. Accessibility of Buildings/Safety Procedures

IV. Work-related Transportation

Addendum - Special Problems with No Specific
Solution

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Introduction

Affirmative action to employ, place, and advance handicapped persons and disabled veterans is required by Public Law 93-112 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973), and by Public Law 93-508 (Vietnam Era Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974). Since enactment of these laws, and in accordance with them, the Agency has had affirmative action plans designed to implement the principles of the handicapped program. While much has been accomplished in removing architectural barriers, establishing recruitment contacts, refining procedures and identifying problem areas, this Task Force believes that special attention needs to be paid to the items outlined in this paper in addition to the objectives of the Agency's affirmative action plan for 1978.

We have targeted the following areas:

I. Attitudes

A. Problem: Overcoming myths and stereotype attitudes related to utilization of handicapped and disabled persons.

1. Managerial Attitude. There is a lack of understanding on the part of supervisors of the needs of handicapped persons. One example of this is not wishing to hire such persons because their perception of the needs to make special accommodations, e.g., communication devices for the deaf; space accommodations for wheelchairs,

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etc. This attitude has overshadowed the actual need of the majority of handicapped persons who require no particular special accommodations. This attitude tends to ward off the manager toward any attempts of bringing handicapped persons into an office environment.

Solution: Encourage and endorse the implementation of the CSC Workshop, "Successful Supervision of Handicapped Employees," with specific emphasis to be placed on Section I which covers, Who are the handicapped? What do I think of them? What are the actual facts about them as employees? What is Selective Placement? What assistance is available in placing a handicapped individual? What is my role?, and Section III which covers How do I supervise a handicapped employee? What should I do differently? What should I tell my other employees? What should I do if the handicapped employee isn't performing adequately? What adjustments will I have to make if I hire a handicapped employee? The incorporation of the proposed program into ongoing management courses would be left to the discretion of the Director of Training. This is an objective of the 1978 Affirmative Action Plan.

2. Employee Attitude: Some handicapped employees are apprehensive of discussing problems arising from

their handicap with supervisors and others in an official capacity.

Solution:

1. Restructure the Handicapped Advisory Committee and expand the committee as necessary to assist and assume the role of informal advisors similar to the MAG structure.

2. Publicize the existence of the Handicapped Program and the Committee through means less formal than Headquarters notices. Such means could take the form of posters and displays and newsletters published by the Committee, the purpose of which is to increase handicapped employees' awareness of available resources.

II. Sign Language Interpreters

Problem: Deaf employees do not have access to certified sign language interpreters who have the appropriate security clearances in order to participate fully in training programs, interviews, conferences, and briefings. Additionally, there is a need for someone skilled in the fundamentals of sign language to assist on a daily basis in the employee's office.

Solution:

1. Recommend that a fully certified fulltime sign language interpreter be hired and possibly administered by OP in a flexible assignment with the capacity to be utilized by both OTR and OP for their respective needs.

2. Train Agency employees who have a need for a sign language skill on a day-to-day basis.

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III. Accessibility of Buildings/Safety Procedures

There are many items concerning building modifications which have been given excellent attention by the Handicapped Program and there are existing emergency evacuation plans which do cover the needs of the handicapped to some extent. Several items in these areas, however, still require further special and immediate attention.

1. Non-headquarters Agency buildings and training facilities are not accessible to the disabled for working or training purposes due to lack of handicapped modified bathrooms, entrances, ramps or elevators where necessary.

2. Headquarters building has only one entrance exit which is even with the ground level. This situation not only presents a definite problem to employees whose mobility is impaired when that employee's office is located on the opposite side of the building, but is a safety hazard in an emergency situation.

3. Emergency evacuation plans for Agency buildings place too great an amount of responsibility on individuals in the handicapped employee's office and on the guard force. These persons are not always physically equipped or knowledgeable enough to handle the various circumstances which could be encountered. Additionally, there is no provision to alert deaf employees to an emergency evacuation condition.

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Solution

Problems 1 and 2

Organize a survey team consisting of the coordinator of the handicapped committee, an advisory committee member, a representative from the building Manager's office, safety officer, and a GSA Representative to visit all Agency building cites and propose specific modifications for the most immediate and expeditious resolution of these problems.

Problem 3

Request that the Safety Officer revamp existing evacuation plans to levy responsibility on office personnel, emergency evacuation wardens, and the guard force only to insure that handicapped employees are directed to designated locations on each floor of each agency building for evacuation instructions. This location will depend upon availability of designated elevator service in buildings where auxillary power is or is not available and so the plan must vary from building to building. An additional warden must be assigned to each designated location to assist in the event of an actual evacuation, otherwise it is not believed necessary for the handicapped employee to actually evacuate under test conditions.

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In the event of an actual emergency, as in the case of apartment buildings, the local fire department should be briefed on all designated handicapped floor locations, and fire department personnel should perform the actual evacuation due to their particular expertise with the evacuation of disabled persons.

Additionally, flashing lights should be installed when possible in all offices where Agency employees are assigned and also in Agency restrooms and at strategic locations in Agency corridors to alert deaf employees of evacuation. Wardens should be instructed to inspect all rooms including restrooms, store rooms, and exercise rooms.

IV. Work Related Transportation

Problem

Currently there is no provision for special transportation to enable handicapped employees to attend work related conferences, interviews, meetings, or training courses as in the case of shuttle services for non-disabled employees.

Solution

Recommend Agency invest in a medically approved van equipped with lift and wheelchair tie-downs to be used for the work-related transportation of Agency

handicapped personnel and for necessary emergency purposes. Vehicle should be under the jurisdiction of the Motor Pool and scheduling should be arranged by the handicapped employee's office. Expense for outfitting such a vehicle should not exceed \$5,000, excluding the cost of the vehicle.

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ADDENDUM FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Special Problems with No Specific Solution

You have now reviewed the items cited in the first part of this paper and at this point you may have reached the conclusion that the problems outlined so far are not insurmountable nor particularly grave. We have selected this particular group for your attention, however, because resolutions of these problems considerably strengthen the handicapped program in those areas which are so very basic not only to those disabled personnel who are currently on board, but to those future qualified applicants who will deserve employment.

The group discussed many things in addition to the selected items. Some of our discussions centered on the many notices and publications which have been sent throughout the Agency, informing personnel of the program but which have apparently been unnoticed or ignored; we discussed the grievance procedures which employees, for one reason or another, do not always seek to take advantage of, but which we feel would serve the purpose if used appropriately; we discussed the very frustrating problem of not being

able to identify all currently employed handicapped personnel thereby assuring that all viewpoints have been fairly represented. Since these problems are primarily based on individual human responses or fears, we concluded that it would serve no purpose to present them as soluble problems at this time, but by strengthening the program through implementation of our recommendations the resulting effect may actually help to resolve them without recourse to further action.

There were two specific problems that were raised during our discussion, however, which appeared to be strictly confined to the personal experiences of two members of the group, and were specifically oriented to their respective offices. We felt these experiences to be significant and cite them for discussion by the persons involved.

1. Built-in Discrimination Against Handicapped Employees in the Competitive Evaluation System

Problem: In components that have overseas requirements, the handicapped employees are at a disadvantage in the Competitive Evaluation System by not receiving ratings or receiving negative ratings in assignability or adaptability areas. The employee is

aware that this exists in his component, and believes it may also occur in others.

2. Discrimination Due to Speech Defect

One member of the group indicated that he believes her slight speech defect affects his superiors in their utilizing of his expertise for various briefings (which he described as being part of his job) and others less qualified were assigned to these roles. He further indicated that a change in superiors brought further the comment after a time from his new supervisor that the new supervisor had been informed that this employee was a troublemaker, but the new supervisor could not understand why he had been told this since he had found this was not the case. Although the employee did not avail himself of existing grievance procedures at the time, his reasons for not doing so were enlightening and this incident highlights the hidden bias which is so difficult for the handicapped employee to effectively deal with without assistance.